

Human Relations Commission
Meeting Minutes
May 18, 2016 5:00 p.m.

Attendance: Justin Carbonella, Brandie Doyle, Henry Fernandez, Rev. Thea Racelis, Howard Thody, Jeanette White, Youth in Government Representatives Angel Biney and Tamika Browne, and staff, Faith Jackson, Director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management

Excused Absence: Richard Kagan and Dr. Marcia McIntosh

Absence: Debbie Ruimerman

QUORUM: Yes: X No:

Call to Order: Justin Carbonella, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m. He asked the commission members to state their names for the record. He welcomed Rev. Thea Racelis to her first meeting. Additionally, he welcomed the commissioners for whom this was their second meeting.

Public Session: None.

Guest Speaker: Justin Carbonella introduced Izzi Greenberg as the Executive Director of the Middlesex Coalition for Children. She's been in that position for four years and has been doing a fantastic job with that organization as one of the chief advocates for young people in the city of Middletown. He had the pleasure of joining her for a presentation several months ago at Wesleyan University where she spoke to Wesleyan volunteers to give them a better understanding of the population of young people with whom she was working. He summarized that the commission spoke at the last meeting about wanting to have a better understanding of their neighbors, and he immediately thought of the work she was doing around issues of income and poverty and the changing demographics of the community. He thought her presentation would be perfect, and he invited her to speak to the Human Relations Commission. Izzi Greenberg explained that her presentation was still in draft form, and there was some discussion on length of time. Faith Jackson said that this presentation will likely piggy-back on the presentation Ed Bonilla of United Way gave the commission about A.L.I.C.E.

Izzi Greenberg began her presentation of "Who are our Neighbors." She stated that they worked on this for two reasons. 1) The coalition works across sectors, juvenile justice, early childhood, childhood hunger, mental health, etc. Part of the work was an effort to get everyone aligned. 2) In watching our public bodies work, it seemed that people who interface with only adults, didn't have a perfectly clear understanding of who the children are in the community because the demographics are really different. An adult without children in the home who doesn't work with a school has an entirely different experience of Middletown than a parent or a school teacher. The demographics between the adults and the children are very different. They're almost two different cities. Therefore, the coalition wanted to put this data together to help the elected officials and governing bodies make decisions for the children we have, not the children they think we have.

Izzi Greenberg continued by saying that she was making the presentation from draft. Once the project is complete, she will send it to Faith Jackson and Justin Carbonella. However, at this time, it is still in draft form. The presentation continued for thirty minutes.

The commission responded with questions regarding the numbers and data. The commission asked if there were any other groups working with the Middlesex Coalition for Children. Izzi Greenberg answered that they have a lot of parents, children's support organizations, North End Action Team, United Way, and NAACP. Jeanette White asked specifically if DCF was involved, and Izzi Greenberg said that two DCF representatives were on her board. She continued by saying that there is ongoing discussion with DCF in disparity, especially in which adults are considered a risk to children. Howard Thody asked about the difference between a home-based daycare and a center daycare. Izzi Greenberg explained that typically a center-based daycare is more of a learning center and promotes school readiness, whereas a home-based daycare is not as focused on school readiness. The curriculum, the ratio of toddlers to infants, and the licensing requirements are different. Daycare centers tend to be more expensive than home-based daycares. However, it is important to note that there are exceptions. Rev. Thea Racelis said she was interested in the role of faith communities. Izzi Greenberg explained that information is included in the report; however, it was not included as a slide. Faith communities play a vital role for the children in helping to serve lunches and in providing summer programs. Also, there are faith-based child care centers. Brandie Doyle asked if there has been any comparison of where students fall in the income groups and the rate of discipline and if there was a correlation. Izzi Greenberg answered that it does skew towards lower income children. There was further discussion on this issue.

Jeanette White asked about the make-up of the coalition's staff. Izzi Greenberg answered that she is the only staff, and she reports to an advisory board made up of a lot of community partners, including the Mayor, Justin Carbonella, the Superintendent of Schools, School Readiness Coordinator, and representatives from the YMCA, DCF, Wesleyan, United Way, Community Foundation, etc. However, she would welcome more diversity on it. Izzi Greenberg also made the point that those who serve on the board are chosen by the organizations as representatives. There was more discussion regarding the importance of diversity, how the board should ideally represent the community, and implicit bias.

Faith Jackson, Justin Carbonella, and the commission thanked Izzi Greenberg for her time and her presentation, noting that it was very informative and provided a great deal of perspective.

Approval of Minutes: Justin Carbonella began the regular meeting by asking for a motion to approve the Revised Meeting Agenda. Brandie Doyle motioned to approve the Revised Meeting Agenda for May 18, 2016. Howard Thody seconded the motion. The chairperson called for a vote. The motion properly carried. Brandie Doyle motioned to approve the Meeting Minutes of March 16, 2016. Jeanette White seconded. The chairperson called for a vote. The motion properly carried with one abstention.

Old Business:

Commission Contact Sheet: Justin Carbonella pointed out the commission contact sheet. He asked if there were any changes to it. Faith Jackson advised that the contact sheet in the package had Brandie Doyle's name misspelled. She distributed a correct one. Additionally, the minutes were corrected as well and a revised copy was distributed. There was no further discussion on the contact sheet.

New Business:

Reschedule July's Meeting: Justin Carbonella moved the discussion to New Business. He advised that the department was offering Thursday July 7th, Thursday July 14th, Tuesday July 26th, and Wednesday July 27th as possible alternatives. Rev. Thea Racelis motioned to move the meeting to July 14, 2016. Howard Thody seconded. The chairperson called for a vote. The motion properly carried.

Department Name Change: Justin Carbonella asked Faith Jackson to speak on the department name change. Faith Jackson announced that a proposal went to the mayor about a year and a half ago to change the Human Relations Department to the Office of Equity and Diversity Management. The reason for the change was when the Personnel Department merged with the Legal Department and formed the Office of General Council, the Personnel Department became the Human Resources Division. The two HR offices became a confusion for the public and internally, within City Hall. They mayor agreed to the proposal. Additionally, when she was hired for the City 19 years ago, she came from the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity at UCONN. The title change is more reflective of the work that the department does. However, the name of all the committees and commissions will remain the same because the titles are appropriate for the work performed.

There was further discussion as to whether the commission should realign its title to that of the department. Faith Jackson advised that Equal Opportunity follows the guidelines of the Affirmative Action Monitoring Committee. The Diversity Management piece embraces what the Human Relations Commission is about, the Walter C. Jones Fund, and the veterans. Justin Carbonella said he agreed with keeping the commission's name the same. Justin Carbonella further clarified that the department name change has no impact on the Human Relations Commission. Faith Jackson confirmed that it will not affect the commission.

2016 Tentative/Projected Goals and Objectives: Justin Carbonella moved the discussion to the commission's goals for 2016. Howard Thody advised that he had the contact information for Chris George, the Executive Director of IRIS. He announced the phone and email to the commissioners. Rev. Thea Racelis said that she serves on the Executive Committee for the Resettlement Coalition and is happy to make connections with the people who are tasked with the resettlement effort. Justin Carbonella asked the commission if there was interest in having the refugee resettlement process be the focus of the July meeting and potentially having a speaker.

Brandie Doyle suggested that the next meeting be a working meeting, as opposed to a presentation. Going forward the commission could establish a pattern of presentation, working meeting, presentation, working meeting, and onward. Faith Jackson said that was a great suggestion. Howard Thody said it would be an effective way to get the new commissioners acclimated. It was agreed that September's meeting may be a more appropriate time to have a presentation from IRIS. Rev. Thea Racelis suggested that the commission also invite someone from the coalition in Middletown. Additionally, the commission could make it known that the presentation would be open to the public.

Justin Carbonella asked that the July commission meeting be held in a conference room to facilitate a round-table discussion. Faith Jackson said she would confirm that the July 14, 2016 meeting would be held in room 208.

2016 Attendance: Justin Carbonella moved the discussion to the attendance. There was some discussion on the attendance of Dr. Marcia McIntosh and her indication that she would be out of the state until November.

Announcements: The next regularly scheduled meeting will be **Thursday, July 14, 2016**, in conference room 208.

Adjournment: With no further discussion, Justin Carbonella asked for a motion to adjourn. Brandie Doyle motioned to adjourn the meeting. Jeanette White seconded. The Chairperson called for a vote. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Kasey Shoemaker,
Administrative Sec. III